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ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

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April 10, 2001

Mrs. Laura Bush
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mrs. Bush:

The Government Reform Committee has an ongoing investigation looking at the dramatic rise of autism in the United States. In California, a child is diagnosed with autism every six hours. In the state of Indiana last year, requests for special education services for children with autism rose by 25 percent. What once was considered a rare disease affecting 1 in 10,000 children now is estimated to affect 1 in 500 children in this country.


As part of our investigation, we looked at the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and conducted a hearing on February 28. We have learned that there is a shortage of qualified special education teachers, speech and occupational therapists to serve these and other disabled children.

We were pleased to hear President Bush's declaration that you will become an "Ambassador of Education" and travel the country encouraging Americans to become teachers. We applaud your efforts to improve our schools by increasing the number of qualified teachers available to become our children's educators. We respectfully request that as you journey around the country recruiting teachers, that you also include specific mention of the need for special education teachers, and speech and occupational therapists as a part of this recruitment.

The Committee will be working with our colleagues in the House and Senate and the Department of Education to develop appropriate and effective recruitment incentives for teachers and would welcome your input as well.

We look forward to working with you and President Bush in meeting the educational needs of our nation's children – those in regulation education classes and those with special education needs. If your staff should have any questions, please have them contact Professional Staff Member, S. Elizabeth Clay at 202-225-5074.

Sincerely,


Dan Burton, Chairman


Bob Barr, Vice-Chairman


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Edolphus Towns



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Joe Scarborough

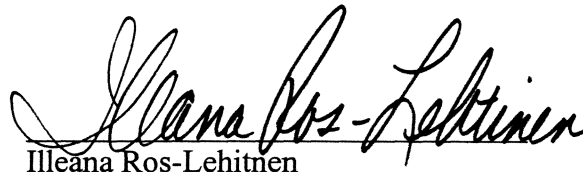

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